



Marine Forces Reserve

Instruction guide for nominating your employer for the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award

www.FreedomAward.mil

What sets your employer apart from others?

Do they make it easy for you to meet your military service obligations?

Did they provide free childcare while you were deployed, or take care of your lawn while you were gone?

Do they check up on your spouse, family members, or perform home repair in a time of crisis in your absence?

Elaborating on all of the ways in which your employer supports you, your family, other service members and the military community will ensure the strongest nomination possible.

Nomination Process

Who is eligible to nominate?

Any reserve service member can nominate his or her employer.

Who is eligible to receive the award?

Companies that have a proven track record for serving the reserve community (previous Patriot, Pro Patria, Above and Beyond award recipients) will be considered. All small, large (500+) and public employers can be nominated. The employer **MUST** be the service member's current employer.

How to Make a Nomination

- Go to www.freedomaward.mil
- Click on the “Nominate Employer” button at the top of the page.
- A nomination submission must be completed in one session, so fill out the online nomination form fully and accurately. There is not an option to save your data and submit later.
- For each question, please provide supporting information in the text box below each question. This is your chance to enhance your nomination by providing thorough explanations of why your employer deserves to be considered for this award. Please see the template examples and nomination summaries below for reference.

After the nomination is submitted online, an executive summary will be generated from the nomination response and then vetted by an ESGR committee member; the nomination will then be forwarded through the selection process.

Freedom Award Questions and Template Examples

Block 1 - Pay Policies: Does the employer provide monetary compensation or unique pay policies when a service member is away from work while performing military service?

“Company X provides differential pay for service members called to duty in order to make up for lost income while on active service (explain the details)”

Block 2 - Benefits Policies: Does the employer, either as a matter of published policy or practice, provide continuation of health care, dental, life insurance, retirement or other benefits not listed for service members or their families when away from work performing military service?

“Company X continues to finance and provide health care to the families of deployed service members even though the company is not obligated to do so.”

Block 3 - Supervisor Training: Does the employer train its managers and supervisors on the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act (USERRA) so that they can effectively manage their National Guard and Reserve Employees? If so, what kind of training (online, in person briefings, etc.) is provided and how often is the training reviewed?

“Company X has developed training modules for the human resource department, implementing them into the supervisor curriculum which educates supervisors on USERRA.”

Block 4 - ESGR Advocacy: Does the employer engage in activities or have established policies which demonstrate an eagerness to help increase employer support for the Guard and Reserve within the community and encourage participation by other employers? If so, what kind of activities does the employer support and how is that support manifested (monetary donations, volunteerism, etc.)?

“Company X certified their human resource department through the ESGR ombudsman training so that the department thoroughly understands the law; in return, the human resource department has spread its knowledge of the program through the company in order to better educate the staff.”

Block 5 - ESGR Awards: Has the employer been awarded other ESGR recognition, such as the Patriot, Above and Beyond, or Pro Patria Awards? If so, list the awards the employer has received (if known).*

“Company X has received two Patriot awards (December of 2013 and March of 2014), and one Pro Patria Award (November of 2014)”.

Block 6 - Hiring Preference: Does the employer provide any preference to members of the National Guard and Reserve in the process of hiring new employees?

“Company X incorporates a preferential hiring practice for military personnel and developed a veteran employee networking group”.

Block 7 - Service Member Support: Does the employer interact with and support National Guard and Reserve employees during periods of military service?

“Company X organizes a network of volunteers to create care packages for their deployed service members. I personally received three care packages full of snacks and desired toiletries.”

Block 8 - Family Support: Does the employer interact with and support the family members of employees during periods of military service? If so, please provide examples and duration of family support (monetary, help around the home, other services, etc.)*

“The company checked in on my family on a monthly basis while I was deployed. My wife experienced an extra layer of comfort knowing that she had a support system with the company. Through the company’s volunteer coordinator, company employees provided lawn care and landscaping maintenance while I was deployed”.

Block 9 - Service Member Recognition: Does the employer provide positive recognition of its National Guard and Reserve employees in organizational publications, events, bulletin boards, employer awards or in other ways?*

“Company X hosts a Veterans Day celebration to recognize current service members and veterans”.

“Company X established an annual program where a day was established for reservists to wear their uniform to work in lieu of business attire”.

Block 10 - General Military Support: Does the employer establish policies or engage in activities that are generally supportive to the US Armed Forces, such as discounts, services, donations, scholarships, employment programs, etc.?*

“Through the company’s veteran outreach program, company X donated 10,000 meals and thousands of articles of clothing for homeless veterans throughout the nation”.

Freedom Award: Winning Nomination Summaries

The following nomination summaries are derived from actual freedom award winners and are provided for use as a reference guide when nominating your company:



2015 Freedom Award winner: College of the Ozarks

NOMINATION SUMMARY	
NOTEWORTHY STRENGTHS OF NOMINATION/EMPLOYER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nominator Comment - "Few organizations have a mission and vision like College of the Ozarks. Their ethos of "God, Country and Respect for Those That Serve" is something I've not seen anyplace else. That ethos extends not only to their students, but to their employees and faculty."• The College of the Ozarks continued to extend full benefits, including full salary for the duration of his deployments. The organization also continued to pay into his retirement account for the entire time.• The College of the Ozarks routinely provides documentation, training and support on the USERRA to all employees, managers and supervisors and ensures compliance at all levels.• Service member received frequent emails and other correspondence from the faculty and student body while deployed. Several departments held donation drives, and sent care packages to his entire unit. Additionally, the College arranged for him to dial in via Skype on Veterans Day for a special recognition breakfast held on campus.• Faculty and students volunteered both time and money to help his spouse with a home renovation surprise for the service member's return. The group also provided his spouse with a monthly gift card and meal gift certificate to ease her burden.• During the 2014 commencement ceremony, the school awarded the service member with a professional development award based largely on his military career.• Missouri ESGR State Chair Comment - "Dr. Davis and the entire College of the Ozarks management team have my strongest endorsement for being recognized by the Department of Defense with this prestigious award. They don't just live up to high standards, they SET the standard. What you see in this submission is only the tip of the iceberg. Take a close look. They are really that good."



2015 Freedom Award winner: Black Hills Corporation

NOMINATION SUMMARY
NOTEWORTHY STRENGTHS OF NOMINATION/EMPLOYER
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gave Service Member (SM) a yearly bonus even though SM was not there to meet the goals required for the bonus.• BHC provides outstanding support to their military employees and their families during military leave.• BHC made a yearlong commitment to this SM's family to provide meals or gift cards to local restaurants every Monday during his deployment, as his wife was pregnant with their fifth child. The company also gave them diapers and gifts when the baby was born. The nominator's father is dependent on SGT Virtue to chop firewood for the winter, so during his deployment, BHC formed a team that would chop firewood for his dad.• BHC made a \$750 donation to the SM's Family Readiness Fund to support their Christmas party.• Department supervisors and co-workers made weekly calls to his spouse and provided assistance with yard work, child care and snow removal.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ "Basically my family knows BHC is on stand-by if anything goes wrong. They are our second family"○ "My supervisor said, 'Is there anything else we can do to support you?' It is truly a culture which supports the military service of its employees."○ "You go do what you need to do; we will take care of things on our end" said another supervisor.○ "Any time I have to do anything with the Guard, my supervisors are always supportive. They have always been there supporting me."○ "BHC makes it easy to do what I love on the civilian side, by not taking away from my military career."• Deployed service members can continue to use their tuition assistance up to \$5,250 per year and the computer loan program. This SM's unit received 7 computers from BHC to set up an internet café to help enhance communication with their families• BHC maintained regular communication with the nominator through e-mails, cards and regular care packages



2015 Freedom Award winner: Boise Fire Department

NOTEWORTHY STRENGTHS OF NOMINATION/EMPLOYER	NOMINATION SUMMARY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 30% of Boise Fire's workforce is Guard, Reserve, or veterans; all Reserve branches are represented. Surviving spouses of deceased military members are given hiring preference. The Boise Fire Department has an appointed military liaison, the Deputy Chief of Operations, who is a retired Air National Guard member whose duties include assisting military members and their families. Mike Hansen, a Marine Corps Reserve member, was called to active duty in 2003, and ended up serving 8 consecutive years of active-duty deployments. During that time, his colleagues at BFD took care of his yard and landscaping. They regularly checked on his house to ensure it was secure and not becoming a target of burglary or vandalism. The department also organized a huge homecoming with uniformed members and fire engines upon his return to the Boise airport. Upon his return, all pay increases from those eight years were given to him. Fire Chief Dennis Doan: "Rather than just say thank you to the Reservists who serve our country, the Boise Fire Department gives special consideration and veteran's points to their job applications. We assist our Idaho military members when they are ordered to serve our country. And most importantly, our firefighters support our military members' families while they are serving. We promise that we are going to continue to lead by example and show our appreciation with our actions." Capt Ingram stated that during deployments, BFD tries to make it "life as usual, minus the person," inviting families to department activities, helping out with school issues, fixing household problems. In other words, taking care of each other by assisting families whenever, and wherever that assistance is needed. BFD also provides free IT support and repair to family members to ensure they are able to communicate with their loved ones who are deployed. BFD sends care packages and letters to their employees while they are deployed. Capt Ingram: "Having served in Iraq twice before transitioning to a civilian career, I have a first-hand appreciation of how valuable efforts like these have on the morale of military members deployed." 	



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